

# Connections

Celebrating Programs Through Partnerships  
Summer 2002

City of Seattle  
Gregory J. Nickels, Mayor



SEATTLE PARKS  
AND RECREATION

## From the Superintendent

### Busy as Ever

As City slashes its budget, and other local governments consider closing parks and reducing or eliminating recreation programs, it's important to stress the basic vitality of Seattle Parks and Recreation.

Typically our busiest time of the year, this summer has been no exception with our summer day camps and playground programs at capacity and our parks as crowded and lively as ever with both organized activities and events such as picnics and Seafair, and fair-weather visits to park beaches, paths and playgrounds.

This issue of Connections highlights three unique aspects of our summer programs, the STEP's program, a pilot project that hires and trains inner city teens to help restore parks trails, our environmental stewardship program and the Summer Resource Advocates who provide invaluable help in problem solving and smooth operation of our Advisory Council-supported summer day camps. All three programs involve partnerships we couldn't do without.

Ken Bounds, Superintendent

### Resource Advocates Help Day Camps Run Smoothly

Summer camp is all about taking field trips, playing games and having fun, right? While that's certainly true most of the time for most kids, not everyone is a happy camper.

Here are some examples from Seattle Parks and Recreation day camps this summer. A seven-year-old boy taunts other campers to the point of disruption. A five-year-old girl bolts from the day camp group on a field trip. The family of one eight-year-old boy is having trouble putting food on the table.

These are all disturbing and difficult situations that day camp staff often don't have the time or experience to handle. That is where day camp Summer Resource Advocates (SRA) can lend a helping hand. Part counselors, part social workers, the advocates help staff in Seattle Parks and Recreation's Summer Day Camp and Summer Playground Programs identify and respond to various problems that arise. This summer is the fifth year of the advocates program.

Five resource advocates under the supervision of a social worker and hired under a contract with the Seattle King County Department of Public Health work full-time for 12 weeks in the summer visiting all 27 of Parks day camp sites. They are assisted by a team of professionals that includes a social worker, "resource advocate," child psychologist, nutritionist, and public health nurse, who are mobilized as needed.

The problems they encounter are mostly behavioral in nature. When conflict and confrontation seemed rife at one day camp earlier this summer, resource advocate Kimberly McClain formed a

*(continued on back page)*



## From the Prez

### Nurturing Advisory Councils

Thank you to the advisory council members who attended the Presidents' Meeting at South Lake Union on August 8. In spite of the short notice, there was a very good turnout and it was a wonderful opportunity for the ARC Board to hear the issues and concerns of the membership. I hope it was useful for Advisory Council members to hear about the activities of the board as well, particularly the reasons for our focus on establishing a set of baseline expectations for councils.

The prospective timeline has the ARC Board approving a set of baseline expectations for the councils at our September meeting, and distributing them to the councils by the beginning of 2003. With assistance from the ARC Board, the goal is to have all advisory councils in compliance by midyear.

At the Presidents' Meeting, I was impressed once again with the commitment and dedication of advisory council members, who work so hard and give so many hours to benefit their communities. A common theme I heard expressed throughout the meeting was a need for assistance: in recruiting, in understanding financial reports, and in training new members. In response, we have organized a series of training workshops. Advisory Council members will receive notices in the mail of the following workshops:

- **New Member Orientation/Current Member Refresher:** Saturday, Oct. 19, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Montlake Community Center
- **Treasurers' Training:** Monday, Oct. 21, 6:30-8:30 p.m., South Lake Union
- **Recruiting Workshop:** Saturday, Nov. 9, 10 a.m.-noon, South Lake Union
- **Grant Writing Workshop:** early 2003.

If you are interested in attending any of these sessions, RSVP to Bill Keller at (206) 684-7083.

Some other suggestions expressed at the Presidents' Meeting were a grassroots-style member newsletter, a talent bank (where, for example, Advisory Council members skilled in grant writing might assist another council without such expertise), quarterly all-council meetings and quarterly treasurers' meetings. These ideas will be discussed at our next ARC Board meeting, 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 25 at South Lake Union. I hope to see you there.

—Jackie Ramels

President, Associated Recreation Council

**First Row: Coco Sherry (Summer Resource Advocate), Kim McClain (advocate), Bonnie Cummings (social worker)**  
**Second Row: Lenore Rubin (child psychologist), Judy Gangle (public health nurse), Nathan Anderson (advocate), and Tricia Baker (advocate)**

## MODEL PARTNERSHIPS

### STEP's in the Right Direction

Working alongside 300-year-old Douglas fir trees in Seward Park earlier this summer, young men and women in the STEP's program learned the value of teamwork as they easily moved several pilings the size of telephone poles to build a bridge over mud.

This was just one example of the many daily accomplishments of the 23 15- to 17-year-olds in Seattle Parks and Recreation's pilot summer program called Steps Towards Environmental Partnership or STEP's. STEP's provides teens from low-income families environmental education and hands-on work experience restoring deteriorated trails in Seattle parks. Daily support, mentoring and challenges from Parks staff have built up self-confidence in the young people, and competence with working with basic tools in nature.

The Department's partners in this project are Seattle Rotary, the Urban League, SAFECO Insurance, and other organizations. The Associated Recreation Council (ARC) is acting as the fiscal agent for the project, including the disbursement of paychecks.

Beginning on July 8 and ending on Aug. 16, the teens worked 30 hours a week, earning the minimum wage of \$6.90 per hour.

After an initial training period, STEP's participants have been out in parks, under the supervision of Parks staff Chris Granstrom, Damon Burgett, Stacy Noland and James Bush, doing the hard work of improving trails. At Seward Park, for instance, a team of STEP's youth laid down six telephone



poles over one wet area of a trail that had become nearly impassable. At Discovery Park they repaired a trail washed out by a mini-landslide. At Interlaken Park they restored a trail damaged by mountain bikers. At most sites, they will remove invasive plants and plant native plants in their place. In the process, they learn an awareness of and appreciation for the natural environment.

"They are accomplishing so much, completing wonderful projects that we don't have the resources for," says Peggy Pullen, one of the STEP's program coordinators for the Department.

The training also includes six hours per week of classroom instruction or educational field trips to develop

personal and career skills. In the classroom, the young people will learn about environmental topics from Parks staff; about personal finance—how to open and keep a bank account—from professionals at Washington Mutual Bank; about personal health and fitness from the Gateway Athletic Club and the Austin Foundation; about conflict resolution from teen peers trained in a program sponsored by Catholic Community Services and the Garfield Community Center; and about job

application skills such as resume writing and interview presentation skills from area business people and community leaders.

"Our goal is to build skills that they can put into actual practice in future jobs," says Lori Chisholm, co-coordinator for the STEP's program. "For most of these teens, this is their first employment experience."

For more information about the STEP's program, please call Peggy Pullen, at (206) 386-1916 or Lori Chisholm at (206) 684-5999.

(Peggy Pullen helped write this article.)

### Learning about the environment and having fun

By Leila Wilke

How do you get kids to read 50 books during their summer vacation?

You make reading fun! This summer Seattle Parks and Recreation partnered with the Seattle Public Library to present the Summer Reading Program with the theme of the environment. Thousands of kids age 6 to 10 in 30 day camp programs throughout the city enjoyed special presentations on dinosaurs, bugs, and musical acts that sang about our urban environment. And of course they read books. Campers who read 10 books or more received a free book.

A 2002 Youth/Teen Development Fund (with backing from the Pro Parks Levy) allowed Parks to purchase more than 9,000 children's books on the environment that circulated all summer among community centers. South Park's day camp program set aside 20 minutes a day for kids to read books. Older children took turns reading to the younger kids who couldn't read. Many kids got free library books.

All summer day camps also participated in other Environmental Stewardship programs. Kids learned about how bugs help the environment, how to conserve water and energy at home, how local trees clean our air, and recycling. Parks naturalists provided training, outreach programs and field trip opportunities to day camp programs.

#### Credits

Jackie Ramels, ARC Board President; David Takami, Editor; Margarite Hargrave, Designer.

For information or comments please call or e-mail David at (206) 684-8020, david.takami@ci.seattle.wa.us

### Advisory Council Fund

The first cycle of the Advisory Council Opportunity Fund contributions, grant applications and awards is under way. This important process gives advisory councils a reliable process to support each other and promote quality recreation programming throughout the advisory council system.

Contributions from advisory councils to the fund need to be made prior to September 30, 2002. Applications for Opportunity Fund grants must also be received by the same date. Awards will be announced on October 31, 2002. For application requirements and other information, please contact Bill Keller at (206) 684-7083 or [bill.keller@seattle.gov](mailto:bill.keller@seattle.gov)

#### Resource Advocates *(continued from front page)*

"friendship group" at the camp, where campers got to know each other better through a series of directed discussions about resolving arguments and team-building games.

Occasionally, the problems are more severe and involve the whole family. Some are in financial crisis or in need of food or permanent housing. Resource advocates help connect these families with food banks, health clinics, Department of Social and Health Services programs, mental health agencies, and other resources.

The advocates also provide vital respite for day camp staff who have their hands more than full during the busy work day. They lead activities, provide program ideas, and lend a sympathetic ear.

The Department's Summer Day Camp Program is strongly supported by community center Advisory Councils.